

Legal Literacy, Self-Advocacy, and Inclusive Education: A Systematic Review of Interventions for Youth with Disabilities

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Abstract

Background: Legal literacy and self-advocacy are critical skills for young people with disabilities to recognize educational rights, seek accommodations, and actively engage in inclusive education.

Results: Ten studies peer-reviewed of various educational interventions with the goal of increasing legal literacy, self-advocacy skills, and other related outcomes in youth aged 10 to 24 with disabilities. Self-advocacy skills instruction and accommodation-request interventions were most prevalent; other interventions included transition support groups, peer mentoring, and web-based instruction. Most interventions demonstrated increases in communication and confidence, self-determination, requesting accommodations, educational engagement/participation, and participation in planning meetings. Digital and peer mentoring interventions resulted in improved support access and connectedness. While interventions were effective at increasing knowledge of accommodations and some "understanding of the process," increases in legal literacy were not consistently reported as an outcome measure. Interventions frequently measured self-advocacy outcomes as well as participant empowerment.

Conclusion: Rights-based and self-advocacy interventions that are practical and integrated could enhance inclusive educational participation. But, there is a need for more robust longitudinal, multi-site, and standardized research on legal literacy. Future research should consider various disability groups, larger sample sizes, international implementation contexts, and long-term outcomes.

Keywords

Legal literacy, self-advocacy, youth with disabilities, inclusive education.